

## **The performance of the municipal director of education in the professional pedagogical activity of management**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this article is to reveal the characteristics of the professional pedagogical management activity that guides the performance of municipal education directors. Correspondingly, the functions to be fulfilled by these directors are determined, related to the political-ideological, scientific-methodological and technical-administrative contents that contribute to the fulfillment of the general purpose and objectives of education through the work system at this level of management, in correspondence with the economic and social demands of the country until the year 2030. The systematization of experiences and in-depth interviews were used to obtain the results.

**Keywords:** Management; Education; Activity; Context; Professional training; Performance.

### **Introduction**

The complex world reality, historically conditioned and marked by globalization, economic crisis, diseases and deep social transformations, demands the readjustment of educational policies and the hierarchization of the social values on which they are based. This, together with the accelerated development of science and technology, the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and, paradoxically, the growth of existential and environmental problems, determine that the training and development of human beings becomes more valuable, ensuring their insertion and protagonism in this context.

This idea is reinforced in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Education 2030 Agenda, especially number four 4, which is aimed at: "(...) ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." (UNESCO, 2015, p.20)

Hence, it corresponds to the educational systems of each country to promote change as a response to the social demand linked to the continuous increase of quality in the comprehensive training of learners, in a complex social historical context, in which the continuous training of education professionals is essential.

In Cuba, the Ministry of Education defines, as one of its priorities, the training of teachers and managers at all levels of management, in correspondence with the pressing educational needs of the present and the future of the nation, contained in the National Plan for Social Economic Development until 2030 (PNDES 2030), main tool to ensure compliance with the objectives and the six strategic axes defined in the Conceptualization of the Cuban economic and social model of socialist development (PCC, 2021), with the participation of all the Agencies of the Central Administration of the State.

In this context, it is essential to have highly prepared, creative and committed municipal education directors, with a holistic vision of the social and economic problems facing the country, taking as a reference the III Improvement of the National Education System.

Taking into account the above, and in accordance with Articles 168 and 169 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba (2019), special attention is given to the professional management activity generated in and from the municipality, since it is the local society that constitutes the primary and fundamental political-administrative unit of the national organization, which enjoys autonomy and its own legal personality,

which favors the deepening of the professional performance of management in that structure.

However, the critical analysis of the reports of specialized visits, methodological assistance and inspections carried out by the Ministry of Education to all provinces of the country and the results of studies conducted by Hernandez (2011), Valle, Carbonell and Herrera (2015), Taquechel (2020), as well as the experience of the main author of this article as director of education of the province Santiago de Cuba and currently as Deputy Minister of Education, corroborates difficulties in the professional pedagogical activity of municipal directors of education manifested in:

1. Limited knowledge of the guiding documents of the country's educational policy and of the principles that guide the operation of the National Education System.
2. Limited preparation for the direction of methodological work, in function of guaranteeing the fulfillment of the purpose and general objectives of education in educational institutions.
3. Insufficient use of science and innovation for the solution of the main problems of the territory.
4. Insufficient conception of the professional development of teachers and managers.

Based on the above, the objective of this article is to unveil the characteristics of the professional pedagogical activity of municipal education directors that guide their performance to achieve educational transformation in correspondence with the economic and social demands of the country until the year 2030.

## **Development**

In order to refer to the professional pedagogical activity and the professional performance of municipal directors of education, we must first address the concepts of management and management in education, taking into account that the last decades Cuba have been characterized by transcendental changes in the mechanisms of

management and organization of science and innovation to achieve sustainable economic and social development at different levels of management.

In order to study the phenomena of management in any sphere of society, it is necessary to reveal its link with specific historical conditions.

The concept of management is used in virtue of the need to manage, taking into account the main processes that characterize the activity and the system of relationships that are established in a given context. In this regard, researchers from the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) and the University of Pedagogical Sciences "Enrique José Varona" refer:

(...) management is first and foremost a social process from which sprout the relationships between people and between them and the means and resources to ensure the maintenance of the balance between internal and external factors and consequently, the stability of change and the achievement of its objectives. (Valle, Carbonell & Herrera, 2015, p.12)

Correspondingly, these authors consider that educational management

(...) is the science that has as its object of study the management processes that are carried out at the different levels of the structure of the National Education System (NES) with the purpose of ensuring the fulfillment of policies, plans and strategies in the field of education. (Valle, Carbonell & Herrera, 2015, p.21)

An analysis of the aforementioned allows a better understanding that educational management is one of the sciences of education, with an autonomous and independent character, which in turn is related to other sciences of this type and considers pedagogy as a normative science with a referative sense.

It also allows understanding the complexity of its object of study, considering that management processes constitute a dynamic succession of phases or stages through which the coordinated efforts of leaders and those being managed pass, taking into account the available resources and their current state, in order to achieve objectives of social significance.

From this position, management in education should be conceived in constant improvement, so that each of the substantive processes that make possible the achievement of the purpose and objectives of Cuban education are integrally directed, for this purpose it is required the use of methods and styles of management that enhance the active and conscious participation of leaders and those led, where the former

motivate, coordinate, influence, drive and guide those led, these criteria are consistent with Taquechel (2020).

That is why in the National Education System this relationship between those who exercise management functions with their subordinates must also have a creative character. The management process in the educational sphere requires that the formative quality of the professional management activity be revealed in order to fulfill the role assigned to it by society, as an expression of the social nature of education.

In this regard, Alonso (2021) considers that the professional pedagogical management activity is a manifestation of the management activity, which is distinguished by:

- The marked technical-methodological and scientific-pedagogical character with which the management process is developed;
- The clear orientation towards the transformation of the personality and the professional development of the cadres and teachers, according to the objectives set by the State for the formation of the new generations;
- The need to develop the management activity within the framework of a process of joint solution of pedagogical-instructive-educational tasks;
- The full communication between the leaders and the led, with the active participation of the political, social and mass organizations that act in their environment.

Professional pedagogical management activity is a broad concept, taking into account the fact that education develops in changing conditions and responds to social requirements. Its structure is based on the general conception of the activity in which multiple factors intervene. Therefore, the Cuban educational system requires prepared, committed, creative and innovative managers capable of guiding their subordinates to fulfill the social task.

The municipal director of education is the highest educational authority in the municipality, and therefore must comprehensively direct education in the territory; promoting attention to education and ensuring each of its processes, by coordinating with political, mass and student organizations through a system of actions that promotes integration and the search for creative solutions to the problems that limit the fulfillment of the social task.

According to Law No.139/2020 on the organization and operation of the Municipal Administration Council, the municipal directors are non-professional members of this

governing body. The document specifies the attributions derived from such condition, in coordination with the different agencies of the territory for the fulfillment of the functions and their articulation with the Municipal Development Strategy.

Consequently, the research process systematizes experiences on the aspects that characterize the performance of municipal directors of education in the professional pedagogical activity they carry out, constituting the axis of systematization. For this purpose, the experiences, work results and good practices of the provincial education directors of Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba were considered of great value, as well as the contributions of Hernández (2011).

The analysis carried out in this regard, allowed the understanding and orderly reconstruction of practical experiences that corroborated that the performance of municipal education directors is determined in part by the functions they perform expressed in the content of the professional pedagogical activity they carry out. This aspect oriented the necessary relationship of the functions of municipal directors with the contents of the activity they perform: political-ideological, scientific-methodological and technical-administrative.

**Political-pedagogical:**

- Execute and control the norms for the implementation of the educational policy, and the institutional communication plans approved by the Ministry of Education, in the different types of education in the territory with the participation of agencies, organizations, the family and the community.
- Directs the diagnosis and characterization of the municipality and the educational institutions shaping the ideo-political map that ensures the integral formation of the students in coordination with the organisms, organizations, the family and the community for the implementation of the actions of the project of continuous improvement of the general education that manages the Ministry of Education and the fulfillment of the Strategies of Municipal Development.
- It directs the educational-preventive work of the territory, oriented to a greater coherence in the actions between agencies, organizations, the family and the community for the solution of the main difficulties that affect the achievement of the purpose and objectives of education.

**Scientific - methodological:**

- Organizes, advises and controls the educational scientific activity with the accompaniment of the territorial scientific council, in which it considers: the educational research to be carried out organized in projects as a way of solution to the identified problems, the formation of the scientific potential, the management of the scientific-educational information and the socialization, introduction and publication of the scientific results.
- Directs, controls and evaluates the methodological work, considering the introduction of scientific results that guarantee the preparation of the management structures, with emphasis on the directors of educational institutions, as this is the level where the fulfillment of the aim and objectives of education is materialized, as established in the Methodological Work Regulations of the Ministry of Education.
- Based on the diagnosis, it identifies the needs for professional development of managers and teachers, with emphasis on principals of educational institutions, and coordinates with the Municipal University Center (CUM) and the Pedagogical schools of the territory, the organizational forms of professional development and the academic training to be developed.
- Monitors and evaluates the results of the educational process and compliance with study plans and programs based on the analysis of indicators that evaluate the quality of education and enable decision making.

**Technical - administrative:**

- Ensures and controls the teaching coverage and the material basis of study that guarantees the development of the educational process that takes place in the educational institutions.
- Directs the school network in correspondence with the demands of the socio-demographic and economic development of the municipality and controls compliance with the requirements for the creation, merger, transfer or closure of educational institutions in the territory.
- Ensures with the organizational structures of the Municipal Administration, organizations and institutions the material, hygienic and sanitary conditions adequate for the integral formation of the students.
- Advises and controls the process of computerization in the municipal structure and educational institutions of its jurisdiction and the technological and audiovisual resources at its disposal.

- Directs, executes and controls compliance with the regulations established for the issuance and delivery of degrees and diplomas corresponding to the types of education.
- Guarantees together with the organizations and entities the plan of attention and stimulation to the workers of the sector and the fulfillment of the collective work agreement.
- Directs the process of implementation of internal control in the municipal directorate of education and educational institutions, ensuring an adequate control environment.
- It was also corroborated that the effectiveness of the professional pedagogical activity of the municipal directors of education is not limited to the knowledge of the functions to be fulfilled; it must be analyzed from the dynamics of their relationships, in movement and transformation with a creative character that has its expression in the flexibility, integrality, adaptability with which they determine the methods and styles of direction to stimulate the participation and commitment of all the actors in the planning, development and evaluation of education in correspondence with the strategies of local development.
- In this sense, the role of delegation of authority, collective management with individual responsibility, democratic centralism, as ways to develop the individual, the use of research and innovation to stimulate the development of research projects from endogenous potentials that respond to the problems identified in the diagnosis of the municipality and the consequent decision making for their solution in each of the stages of the work system at this level of management, are of great importance.

It was found that for the determination of management methods, one must start from the characterization of the municipal structure, as well as of the educational institutions, so the starting point is the diagnosis, for being a process that makes it possible to know the particularities of education in the territory (potentialities of its development, strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities), which allows to deepen in the school, family and community environment. This requires:

- The determination of the indicators to diagnose in the educational, family and community context.
- Determination of scientific methods and instruments to obtain information.
- Processing of the information obtained.



- Analysis of the results of the diagnosis, determining the potentialities and weaknesses of its development.
- Design of a strategy for transformation, also taking into account the results of scientific research and innovation.

The design of the diagnosis is the responsibility of the municipal director of education and all the members of this structure participate, from the design of the instruments to be used for the collection of information, to the realization of the final assessments about the situation of each of the educational institutions, which considers how the school, family and community context is expressed.

The successful execution of the diagnosis also contributes in a remarkable way to the achievement of a characterization of the municipal directorates, as it is a process that leads to the description and explanation of the distinctive aspects of the territory, which will become the starting point for the design of actions and the achievement of the desired transformations, based on their contextualization.

The identification of scientific leaders and experts to create networks of actors that collaborate in the production of knowledge (intersectoral, interinstitutional and interdisciplinary articulations) is significant in this action, which can assume the tasks of directing this activity, specifying the scientific results, their introduction, systematization and socialization through events and publications.

The planning, execution and control of the activities and actions corresponding to each process is carried out through the appropriate relationship between the technical and management bodies in the three stages identified in the work system developed at the municipal level: the Board of Directors, the Staff Commission, the Scientific Council of Education, the Municipal Preventive Work Group, the Coordinating Group of the Educate Your Child Program, the Commission for the Granting of Enrollment for Children's Circle and Semi-boarding School and the Prevention and Control Committee. It also directs the system of methodological meetings: Methodological Technical Council, Meeting of subject commissions, Preparation of the municipal structure, Political preparation of center directors, Methodological meeting with center directors, Information, analysis and work control meeting (RIACT), MINED - MINCULT meeting, MINED-INDER meeting, MINED- MINSAP meeting.

It is conceived in the work system, as an aspect that allows the demonstration and control of the different processes that are developed, the planning of the system of

visits: methodological, specialized and partial or integral inspection visits, in which the objectives and contents object of demonstration and/or control are defined, considering the diagnosis and characterization of each educational institution.

Therefore, in this research, the professional performance of the municipal director of education is defined as the system of actions of political, scientific and innovative character proper to the functions developed by the municipal director in the professional pedagogical activity of direction to fulfill the social task of the continuous improvement of the quality of education in the territory.

The active participation of municipal principals as protagonists of the professional pedagogical activity of management, makes possible the educational transformation based on:

- Stimulate commitment and preparation for the strategic projection of local development processes, particularly the management of research projects based on the characterization of the territory.
  - Promote innovation at the local level and in connection with it, prioritize the training of qualified labor force in the territories and maintain coverage, which are aspects closely related to territorial development strategies in the education sector.
  - To train the municipal structure and educational institutions, so that they appropriate the knowledge and management methods necessary to guarantee efficient professional performance.
  - Encourage permanent dialogue to favor joint action at the educational levels, in integration with community factors and stimulate the development of cognitive, scientific and technological capacities at the local level.
  - To achieve leadership in the methodological advice to the territorial and local development strategy.
- a) Make the right decisions, based on the analysis of different variants of solutions to the problems that arise with objectivity, rationality, flexibility and originality.

## **Conclusions**

The performance of municipal directors of education is determined by the functions they fulfill expressed in the content of the professional pedagogical activity of management: political-ideological, scientific-methodological, technical-administrative and the dynamics of their relations in movement and transformation, with a creative character that has its expression in the flexibility, integrality, adaptability with which they determine the methods and styles of management to stimulate the participation and commitment of all the actors in the planning, development and evaluation of education in correspondence with the strategies of local development.